

Danzig

The Ancient City & the Modern City State

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UNTIL recently Danzig was chiefly known for a sticky, caressing liqueur flavoured with cinnamon and floating tiny particles of gold leaf—the eau de vie de Danzig of big international restaurants. But now this very ancient city has acquired a new importance, owing to the frantic rivalries between Poland and Prussia since the Great War.

One can easily understand why the Poles need Danzig and the Germans were reluctant to give her up. She is the outlet of the Vistula, which, with its affluents, covers a larger area than any German river, and, if money can ever be found for the construction of canals, will serve the whole basin of the Oder, Niemen, Dniester, and Dnieper.

Danzig, or Gdansk, as the Poles call her, was first known as a Slav settlement at the end of the tenth century, and belonged to Poland until the beginning of the fourteenth, when she was taken over by the Teutonic Order, which undoubtedly contributed largely to her prosperity. The Order had been founded by Crusaders in Palestine, had made a short and futile attempt to colonise Transylvania, and had then been rashly invited by the King of Poland to settle in his country. The result was that it dominated and spread everywhere, obtaining after some eighty years an outlet to the sea at Danzig.

The method of annexation

was characteristic of Teutonic regard for hospitality. There was a sudden raid on the Feast of S. Dominic, accompanied by the murder of more than 10,000 men, women, and children, who constituted the bulk of the population. Many took refuge in the church and monastery, where they were burnt to death. German settlers were imported to take their place, and Gdansk became a German city.

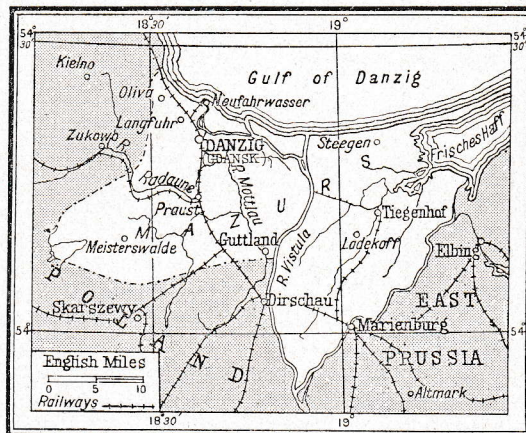
Even the German settlers, however, became restless under the oppressive, although fostering, yoke of the Order. There was a revolt in 1454, and Danzig became Polish once more. She was mixed up in all sorts of warfare during the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, and was often besieged, but never taken, except once by the Russians in 1734. In 1793 the second partition of Poland restored her to German rule, but in 1807 she surrendered to Bonaparte's marshal Lefebvre.

By the treaty of Tilsit (July, 1807), Danzig was declared a free and independent city, with a Polish garrison and in close connexion with the duchy of Warsaw, but in reality under the

protectorate of Napoleon, which lasted six years.

In 1814 Danzig surrendered to the Russian and Prussian armies, and remained German until 1919, when she became a free city-state under the League of Nations.

Danzig has always been more or less in the British orbit.



THE FREE CITY-STATE OF DANZIG

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DANZIG, THE CITY STATE

British shipping was one of the earliest sources of her prosperity. In 1392 she received no fewer than 300 visits from British ships as against 100 in 1918. British merchants established counting-houses, built churches and granaries, supported missionaries, and gave money for municipal purposes. When there was an economic war between England and the Hanseatic League, Danzig was excepted from proscription and Queen Elizabeth conceded a goodly share of the White Sea trade. During the reign of Queen Anne the British colony in Danzig was the largest on the Continent. Even now there are still various traces of the old British influence.

Embarrassing Relic of Prussian Rule

The population is still largely German, owing to the restrictions which German masters imposed upon immigration.

The Polish citizens consist almost exclusively of Protestants, who have maintained their religion for centuries under the mild rule of Catholic Poland. They are lively, genial people, known as Mazurs, from the place of their origin, and are best remembered in the outside world as the creators of the Mazurka, their national dance.

With Danzig now an independent state they have many difficulties before them, the chief of which is a horde of useless officials, a very embarrassing relic of Prussian rule. Least of all can small states afford to pay parasites, and the only hope is to obtain productive work from the majority of the citizens.

Street Names that Tell a Story

Danzig is essentially an industrial, middle-class town to the tips of its palaces. You can tell this by the style of the buildings and the names of the streets. The chief thoroughfares are Woolweaver Street, Milkcan Street, Blacksmith Viaduct, Pursemaker Street, Anchor Smithy, Bucketmaker Court, Cooper Street, Ironmonger Street, Potter Street, Butcher Street, and our old friend Baker Street. These names bring home to you the whole spirit of honest toil, while a smell of brewing and factories mingles with the hammering

of smithies and the rumble of machinery in the air, and there in Trousermaker Street are three tailors sitting cross-legged on the ground at an open window and chaffing the maidens as they pass.

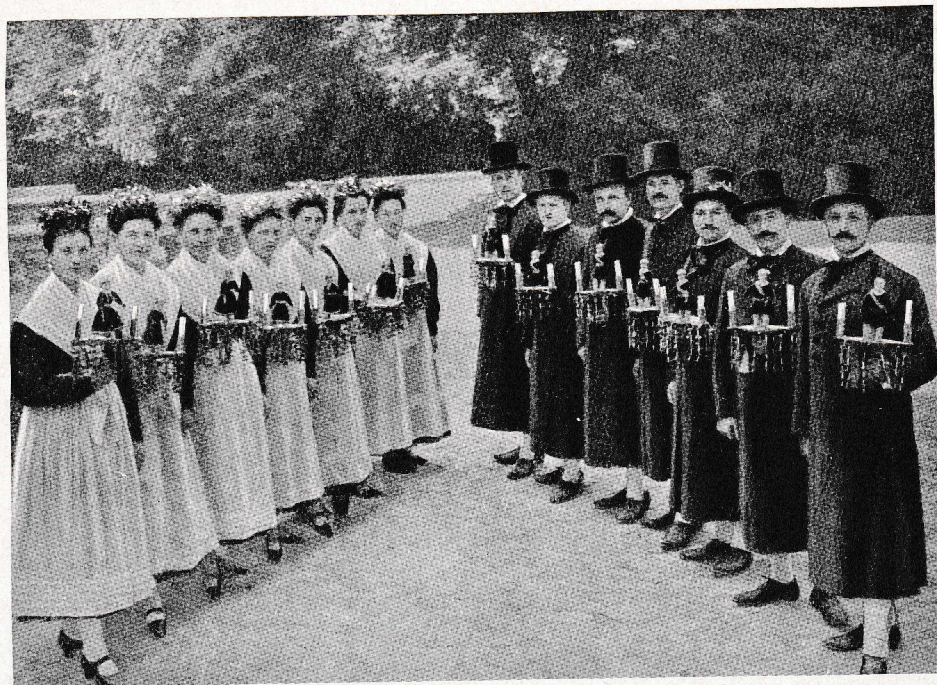
The first impression is that you have stepped right back into the Middle Ages. There is probably nothing like it anywhere except Lübeck, while even Nuremberg seems almost modern in comparison. But Danzig is severe in its medievalism, with heavy substantial houses, gleaming gables, turrets, heavy balls of stone, ponderous statues, gargoyles, heraldic beasts, all sorts of florid decorations. There are usually flights of stairs at the entrances with stone balustrades ending in lions with gaping jaws, or voracious fishes, or menacing dragons.

The houses are often magnificent within, possessing wonderful carved staircases, frescoed ceilings, and beautiful old furniture, much of which, however, has been sold and carried away during a succession of troublesome times. You can trace the architectural development of the town in the various quarters, ranging from prim red brick to richer sandstone, the garish buildings of the seventeenth century, and the unsightly creations of more modern German art.

Teuton v. Polish Architecture

An enthusiastic German talks with patriotism of Danzig as "the petrified shadow-play of old fairy tales," but there is really little or nothing dainty or mystical about this solid over-decorated city, more like a collection of christening cakes or substantial stage scenery than anything suggestive of romance. And yet the effect is not unpleasant. Above the buzz of business you hear cheery clocks chiming simultaneously from ten different towers, while hundreds of bells play sober carillons. A local poet has summed up the general impression of "dark gables and high windows, towers peering through the mists, statues pale as ghosts standing silent by the doors."

High as the houses are, they seem like children's toys beside the heavy Teutonic cathedral of S. Mary. It seems



YOUNG MEN AND MAIDENS PAIRED FOR THE BRIDAL DANCE

Action dances inevitably tend to disappear as civilization develops, being preserved, if preserved at all, only in dramatic ballet. Thus peculiar interest attaches to this bridal dance still practised by the peasantry dwelling in the Nogat valley territory of Danzig. It is danced by men and women arrayed in bridal costume and carrying puppet brides and bridegrooms set between candles

to have eaten up all the space which was needed for streets and to have folded all the adjoining dwellings under its wing.

The Germans of Danzig are very proud of this overgrown edifice as a monument of German greatness and strength; and the utmost contempt is expressed for the humbler and more beautiful architecture of the Poles, which is dismissed as almost horizontal beside all this triumph of the perpendicular. The high altar is painfully Gothic and has not been improved by German attempt at restoration in 1870, or by the effect of very modern stained glass windows presented by the King of Prussia in 1844 as the first-fruits of a new Berlin factory.

Almost the only object of interest is a Last Judgement by Hans Memling (or Memling), painted in the fifteenth century for a member of the house of Medici. On its way to Florence it was captured by a Danzig cruiser, whose owners presented it to this

church. Following the Napoleonic custom of art pillage, the French carried it off to Paris in 1807, but it was brought back after Waterloo.

Other important edifices include the Artushof or Junkerhof, called after King Arthur of England and, later, after the rich merchants of the Baltic, who were the original Junkers and held their exchange here. The town hall is regarded as a triumphant monument of independence and civic strength, but not necessarily of Germanism, for the tower is surmounted by a statue of a king of Poland. The chimes enjoy special fame, the painted ceilings are Venetian, and there is a remarkable winding staircase of carved oak.

The chief resort of the town is the Long Market, flanked by gable after gable of the best patrician houses. The rivers Mottlau and Radaune, tributaries of the Vistula—the Mottlau drowsy and sluggish, the Radaune a rushing torrent and father of mills and factories—are the great arteries of



MODERN ENTERPRISE IN MEDIEVAL ENVIRONMENT

Fine seventeenth century gabled buildings flank the Langemarkt and Langgasse, busy thoroughfares running like a single street through Danzig from east to west. At their point of junction stands the fourteenth century Rathaus, with a slender tower 270 feet high, ending in a graceful spire topped by a figure said to represent King Sigismund Augustus of Poland. The Neptune Fountain, past which tramlines now run, was cast in 1633



ANTIQUATED ORNAMENT DOOMED BY THE MARCH OF PROGRESS

Almost peculiar to Danzig are the stone terraces, something like the Florentine loggias, before the houses, and formerly used for family gatherings. As seen here from the Brodbankengasse, they are approached from the street level by flights of steps with stone or iron balustrades, often elaborately ornamented. Unfortunately, these survivals from a long-past time are incompatible with the development of modern street traffic, and they are fast disappearing

DANZIG, THE CITY STATE

Danzig, the secret of all her ancient prosperity. The great rafts of timber, which have probably travelled for hundreds and hundreds of miles, afford a constant joy and interest to visitors. The so-called Long Bridge, which is the quay of the Mottlau, is crowded with bargemen, and offers bright touches of colour with the many booths and stalls which overflow with fruits and flowers and greenery in the springtime.

If Danzig be unduly solemn and severe, the same cannot be said of the beautiful country outside. Stand on the ancient ramparts, or climb to the fort on the Bischofsberg, and you will enjoy a prospect that is a feast of colour. And if you doubt the influence of Polish civilization, drive a few miles to the village of Oliwa and visit the famous old Cistercian Abbey, which was suppressed about 1800, but still contains carved statues of Polish kings and tombs of Polish dukes. There are portraits of all the Polish abbots since 1170. It was

here that Sweden and Poland concluded peace after a war of more than 60 years, and you are shown a black marble slab beneath which the treaty has been deposited.

Danzig is bound to Poland, Poland to Danzig. Without any injury to the present German population, and without any pressure upon it, on the lines of voluntary and natural choice of what is one's own good, and under the influence of factors more attractive still than they were in the times before the Partitions—a more intensive business connexion with Poland, nearer communications with her centres, Posen, Warsaw, and Cracow, and union with the more effective influence of Polish national culture—under such conditions as these the ancient city of Danzig, born anew in the present, and possessing as it does, excellent natural facilities for maritime trade, will become the great, powerful, and prosperous seaport of the resurrected Poland.



SLIPPERY SPORT: A JUMP-FOR-HERRINGS COMPETITION

In many parts of the world a popular amusement of young folks is to attempt to take a bite out of a suspended apple without touching it with the hands. Danzig boys get uproarious fun out of this much more difficult feat—springing on skates from the ice and snatching a herring from a string by catching it between the teeth